

## THE ORIGINS OF FATIMID ART

The Fatimid caliphs who ruled Egypt from 969 to 1171 are justly famed for their generous patronage of architecture and the arts and for their lavish ceremonies. Almost immediately after they moved from North Africa, where they had ruled for half a century, to Egypt, where they founded their new capital of al-Qahira, men and women of the Fatimid court began to finance major buildings. The arts of Egypt, most notably textiles and ceramics, flourished. While something of their character was anticipated in the artistic production of Tulunid Egypt, nothing known from that period quite prepares us for the splendid creativity that drew upon the traditions not only of Egypt but also of the entire medieval Mediterranean world.

What inspired this sudden efflorescence? Was it essentially an Egyptian or a dynastic development? Is it attributable to general economic prosperity or solely to dynastic patronage? To what extent do its sources lie in North Africa? Virtually everyone who has studied the art of the Fatimids has asked these questions, but the extremely fragmentary evidence for Fatimid patronage—the remnants of a few buildings, some textiles and coins, and an ivory box—before their move to Egypt makes their answers difficult to find. Nevertheless the evidence for a coherent explanation can be extracted, if not from these few artistic remains, then from the texts that provide accounts of the dynasty's early years.<sup>1</sup>

The foundation of the Fatimid caliphate in the early tenth century in what is now Tunisia was the result of a fortuitous convergence of events in Syria and North Africa. From Salamiyya in Syria, a man claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and his son-in-law 'Ali ibn Abu Talib directed a vast but secret organization to convince the world that he was the sole legitimate heir to the Prophet. His first victory came in North Africa, where the Aghlabid amirate was maintaining tenuous control for the Abbasids over a rebellious, largely Berber population. Ten years of propagandizing and military

ventures transformed the dream of a Fatimid state into a reality: on 29 Rabi' II 297 (26 January 910) one 'Ubayd Allah assumed the protocolary title *amir al-mu'minin* ("Commander of the Believers") and the regnal name of *al-mahdi* ("the Right Guide") and, accompanied by his son and his chief missionary, rode into Raqqada, the Aghlabid capital, where he assumed his role as the just ruler on earth.<sup>2</sup> Barely sixty years later, after decades of conflict and slow consolidation of power, 'Ubayd Allah's great-grandson, al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, rode triumphantly through Fustat, the capital of Egypt, and established his dynastic seat there on 7 Ramadan 362 (21 June 972).

The differences between 'Ubayd Allah's occupation of the Aghlabid capital in North Africa and his great-grandson's triumphal procession into the capital in Egypt are startling. 'Ubayd Allah simply rode into town accompanied by his chief missionary and his son; al-Mu'izz was the center of an elaborate theatrical spectacle mounted and performed under the direction of his general, Jawhar. Met at the western desert by all the notables of Egypt, the ruler paraded through Giza, across the Nile by bridge, and through Fustat to al-Qahira, where Jawhar had prepared a magnificent palace for him in which he held court.<sup>3</sup>

The precision and elaborateness of the procession indicate not only the importance attributed to it, but also the Fatimids' ability to mount such a spectacle. The founding of a new capital in Egypt and its inaugural festivities also testify to an extraordinary development in the dynasty's awareness of the power of visual symbols, such as constructions, coins, banners, and parades, for maintaining the caliph's personal and dynastic prestige and for manipulating popular support.

Although such forms and practices became a hallmark of the Fatimids, they were certainly not unique to them but already commonly practiced among contemporary rulers, both Muslim and Christian. Tracing the development of their use through the period of Fatimid rule in North Africa does, however,

demonstrate how these devices were consciously adopted and developed to further some specific aims of the caliphate. Just as the Fatimid policy that led to such notable success in 969 was the result of the sixty years of experience in the Maghrib, so the use of visual symbols as represented by al-Mu'izz's entry into Egypt was the result of experimentation and the lessons learned from it in those same years.

The textual accounts for the earliest period confirm the evidence: al-Maqrizi states that when 'Ubayd Allah's chief missionary, Abu 'Abd Allah seized power from the last Aghlabid amir in 909, he is said to have had coins struck bearing the legends "the proof of God has arrived" on the obverse and "the enemies of God are dispersed" on the reverse.<sup>4</sup> Conserved in the Musée du Bardo in Tunis is a gold dinar minted in Qayrawan in 297 (910) that bears precisely these legends.<sup>5</sup> It is a typical Aghlabid type of dinar, except that the legends occupy the space which would normally have held the ruler's name. Since the ruler had not yet been revealed, these two appropriate phrases filled the void. According to Muhammad ibn Hammad, similarly appropriate slogans were also inscribed on banners, weapons, trappings, and seals.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, none of these has survived.

Having seized control, Abu 'Abd Allah left Qayrawan to rescue 'Ubayd Allah, who had reached Sijilmasa after an arduous and dangerous journey from Syria, only to be imprisoned along with his son Abu'l-Qasim by the local Midrarite amir.<sup>7</sup> Having freed them, Abu 'Abd Allah is then said—by Ja'far, chamberlain to 'Ubayd Allah—to have organized a review of the troops in which 'Ubayd Allah sat on a throne while his supporters were presented to him in order of their rank.<sup>8</sup> The ceremonial aspects of this scene can only be fanciful anachronism, Marius Canard concluded, for they reflect conditions that prevailed in the 970's when Ja'far wrote his description, rather than those of 909, when the event was supposed to have occurred.<sup>9</sup>

Before 'Ubayd Allah arrived in North Africa, Abu 'Abd Allah is said to have worn "coarse and lowly garments";<sup>10</sup> after it, both of them as well as the heir-apparent Abu'l-Qasim were described by Ahmad ibn 'Idhari, among others, as wearing garments of fine silk and linen fabrics with matching turbans.<sup>11</sup> 'Ubayd Allah rode into Raqqada in triumph wearing dark silk clothes with a matching turban. Riding behind him, Abu'l-Qasim wore a similar ensemble in orange silk. Abu 'Abd Allah wore mulberry-colored clothes, a linen

tunic, a turban, and an "iskandārani" scarf.<sup>12</sup> Some sources speak disparagingly of 'Ubayd Allah's fondness for luxurious garments, but it surely signified more than mere self-indulgence:<sup>13</sup> rich textiles have traditionally stood for wealth and prestige.

When 'Ubayd Allah assumed the regnal name al-Mahdi he ordered his name mentioned in the khutba and inscribed on coins, which were standard vehicles for the symbolic expression of sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> He then ordered that the names of all patrons be removed from "mosques, cisterns, forts, and bridges" and replaced with his own.<sup>15</sup> The erasure and subsequent relabeling of monumental inscriptions recall the case of the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun who tampered with the foundation inscription of the Dome of the Rock.<sup>16</sup> It is hard to imagine that either ruler believed that such a change would cause the public to forget the name of the original builder.<sup>17</sup> Rather, the act was a symbolic *prise de possession*, ensuring to the new claimant the symbolic advantages of citation, that is, the benefits from any *baraka* the building might have. Nearly a century and a half later the scene was replayed when al-Mu'izz ibn Badis anathematized the Fatimids and removed their names from inscriptions on coins, flags, standards, and buildings.<sup>18</sup>

In 912 al-Mahdi decided to leave Qayrawan and set up his own dynastic seat. In so doing he declared his intention of making North Africa more than a temporary stopping place on the march to conquer the world. Al-Mahdiyya, as the new capital would be called, was to be the source of all the forces of the new dominion. The site selected was a peninsula between Susa and Sfax, whose strategic advantages were enhanced by double land walls ordered in 916 (fig. 1).<sup>19</sup> It also had the advantage of being far enough away from the hostile Sun-

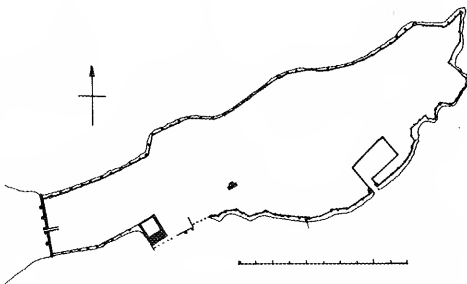


Fig. 1. Al-Mahdiyya. Site plan (after Lézine).

ni atmosphere of Qayrawan, but not so far as to be out of its commercial sphere. After al-Mahdiyya was built, Qayrawan did not immediately lose its commercial preeminence, but eventually the new capital surpassed it as the commercial center in a dominion which already spread across Africa and over the sea to Sicily.

Practical concerns are also evident in the types of buildings erected in al-Mahdiyya. The official inauguration of the new capital was pushed forward to 8 Shawwal 308 (20 February 921) as a result of heavy rains in the old capital at Qayrawan; al-Mahdi, his son, and members of the court were forced to move into their residences even though the buildings were not yet finished.<sup>20</sup> The mosque was probably completed soon after, and al-Maqrizi mentions a musalla built just outside the city walls.<sup>21</sup> By 922 naval expeditions had already returned to al-Mahdiyya from the Calabrian coast, so presumably port facilities—such as the dockyard mentioned in the texts—existed by then.<sup>22</sup> In May 945, merchants left al-Mahdiyya's shops and markets in fear of the Kharijite rebel Abu Yazid, but by the time Ibn Hawqal visited the same place only four years later there were "many palaces, houses, fine baths, and khans."<sup>23</sup> Thus, despite the depredations of Abu Yazid, within two decades of its founding al-Mahdiyya was a functioning and prosperous city.<sup>24</sup>

The meager archaeological evidence makes it difficult to reconstruct the original appearance of the city. Various scholars have attempted to identify the palace of Abu'l-Qasim and the dockyard; Lézine tried to reconstruct the city gate, now known as the Saqifa al-Kahla ("Dark Vestibule") which was extensively remodeled in the sixteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Only the Great Mosque, rebuilt on the model of its original Fatimid plan in the 1960's, stands as a direct successor to its early Fatimid prototype.<sup>26</sup>

Remains of an entrance-complex to a building exhibiting features of "tenth-century construction techniques" have been excavated at al-Mahdiyya and have been tentatively identified as the entrance to the palace of Abu'l-Qasim mentioned in the texts (fig. 2).<sup>27</sup> Lucien Govin found a similar entrance complex at a building which he identified as the palace of Ziri at Ashir (fig. 3). According to al-Nuwayri (d. 1333), it was built in 324 (935) by "a builder who surpassed all others in Ifriqiya."<sup>28</sup> Abu'l-Qasim is said to have given Ziri permission to build the palace, making the proposed identification all the more attractive. However, none of the earlier sources (e.g., Ibn Hawqal, al-Bakri, and Ibn Hammad) either tell the same story or give the same

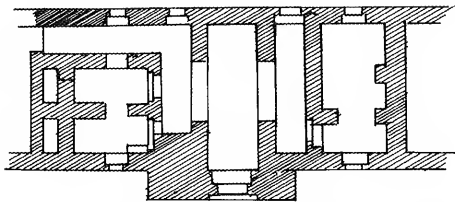


Fig. 2. Al-Mahdiyya. Supposed palace of Abu'l-Qasim. Plan of the entrance complex (after Marçais).

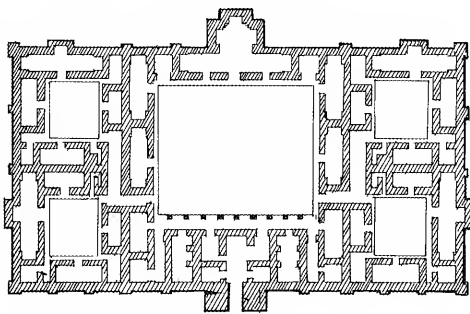


Fig. 3. Ashir. Palace of Ziri. Plan (after Golvin).

date; therefore the identification should be treated cautiously, especially since the foundations unearthed at al-Mahdiyya do not conform to the arrangements reported by al-Bakri.<sup>29</sup> The desire to identify the ruins with a historical personage has obscured the fact that the quality of its construction and decoration are not in any way out of the ordinary. While these ruins may be the remnants of the entrance to a large private residence, there is no reason to assume that Abu'l-Qasim lived there when he succeeded his father as al-Qa'im.

The mosque is the only substantial monument remaining from the Fatimid period in Tunisia (fig. 4 and plate 1). The T plan, the doubling of supports in the central aisle, and the arcades surrounding the court were all clearly inspired by the Great Mosque of Qayrawan (fig. 5). The most remarkable feature of Qayrawan's mosque—the massive minaret opposite the mihrab—was not copied at al-Mahdiyya, however; instead, projecting corner bastions flank a central pro-

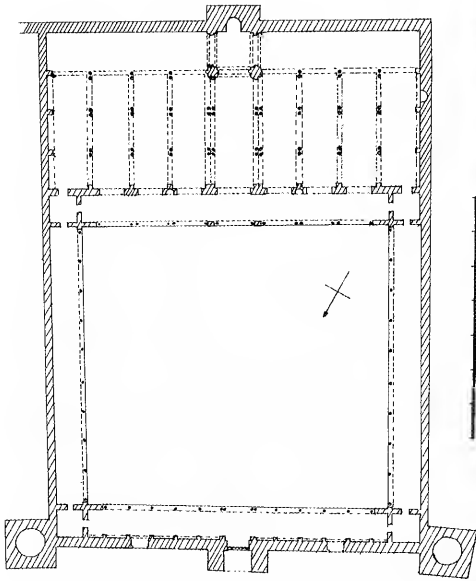


Fig. 4. Al-Mahdiyya. Mosque, Plan (after Lézine).

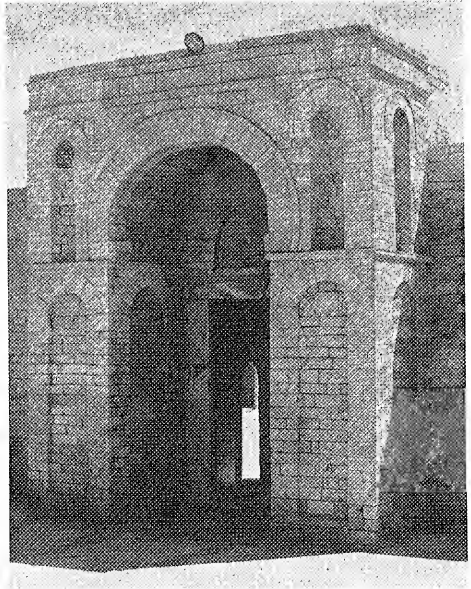


Plate 1. Al-Mahdiyya. Great Mosque. Portal. (Photo: J. Bloom.)

jecting portal. Given the strong role played by the Qayrawan mosque as a model for all other features of the mosque at al-Mahdiyya, it is indeed odd that its massive minaret was not included.<sup>30</sup>

The portal consists of a projecting stone block containing a large central arched opening flanked by two stories of shallow niches (plate 1). Its form is reminiscent of, and no doubt inspired by, late-antique triumphal arches, some of which can still be seen in the Tunisian countryside (plate 2).<sup>31</sup> For that reason, Lézine claimed that the "triumphal" character of the portal was in keeping with the Fatimid passion for ceremonies, and he proposed a plan for the whole site that could provide a fitting stage for them (fig. 6).<sup>32</sup> Although the portal's formal debt to triumphal arches cannot be denied, Lézine's interpretation is nonetheless unwarranted: there is no evidence that Fatimid ceremonial was well developed at this early date. The formal arrangement of the façade derives from monuments such as the ribat at Susa (plate 3), where a projecting portal is flanked by corner bastions. At Susa one of the bastions supports a

tower, but apparently no such tower or towers existed at al-Mahdiyya.<sup>33</sup> Fatimid mosques did not usually have minarets, but they often did have monumentalized portals.<sup>34</sup> Since it has been suggested that the monumental portal at the Aqmar mosque (519/1125) had a particular Isma'ili significance,<sup>35</sup> and since an unbroken line connects this mosque with that in al-Mahdiyya, it is not unwarranted to see the connection here.

The mosque at al-Mahdiyya is on one level a logical product of local forms and techniques of construction. The peculiar location of the mosque precluded a slavish imitation of the mosque at Qayrawan and may have suggested the replacement of Qayrawan's lateral entrances with ones opposite the mihrab. Whatever the reason was for replacing a minaret with a portal, the mosque of al-Mahdiyya itself exerted a powerful influence on the forms of later Fatimid mosques.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Mahdi regarded his city as more than a practical complex of walls, port, mosque, and palace. For him it was the tangible symbol of the new era he was ushering in on earth. A poem composed in 308 (921) for al-

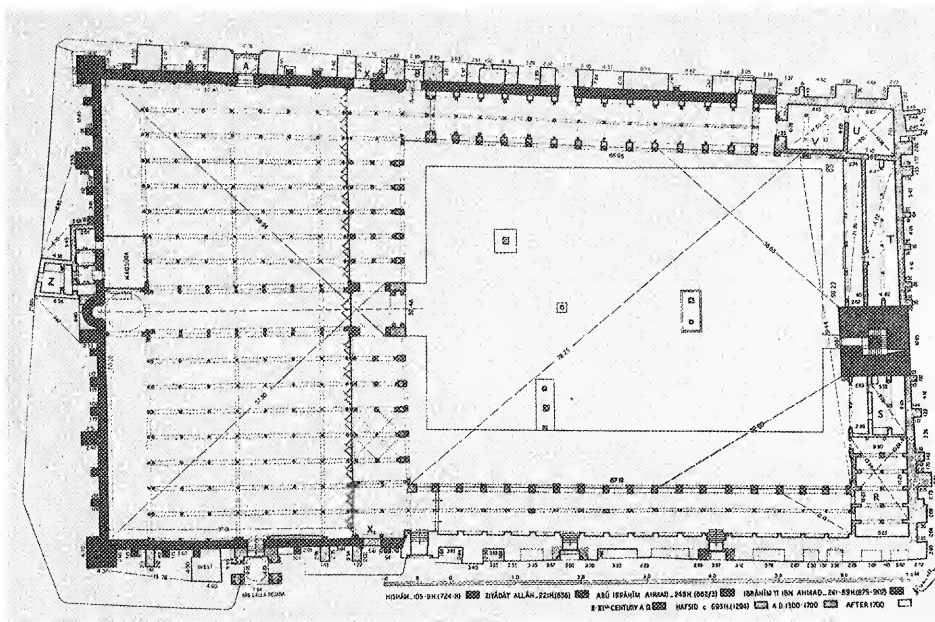


Fig. 5. Qayrawan. Great Mosque. Plan. From K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford, 1932-40), fig. 180.

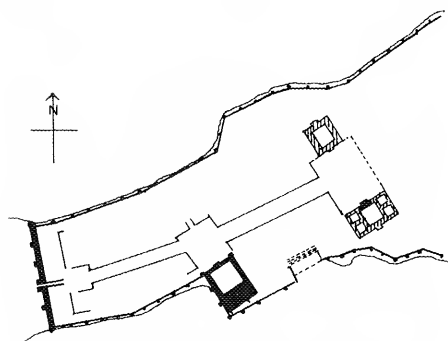


Fig. 6. Al-Mahdiyya. Hypothetical site plan (after Lézine).

Mahdi to celebrate his arrival in his new home expresses this clearly:

Congratulations, O magnanimous prince,

For your arrival on which time smiles.

You have established a camp in a hospitable land

Which the glorious envoys have secured for you.

If indeed the sanctuary and its precincts are exalted,

Its ossuary shrines are equally exalted.

A residence has arisen in the land of the West.

Praying and fasting in it will be acceptable.

It is al-Mahdiyya, the sacred, the protected,

Just as the sacred places are in Tihama.

As if your footprints make it

The Maqam Ibrahim when there is no station  
[maqām].

As the pilgrim kisses the Corner,

We kiss the court of your palace.

If indeed Time and Dominion grow old,

Their foundations are but rubble when tested.

O Mahdi, Dominion is itself a servant to you,

Served by Time itself.

The world is yours and your progeny's wherever you are.

In it all of you will always be imams.<sup>37</sup>



Plate 2. Sbeitla. Arch of Antoninus Pius. (Photo: J. Bloom.)

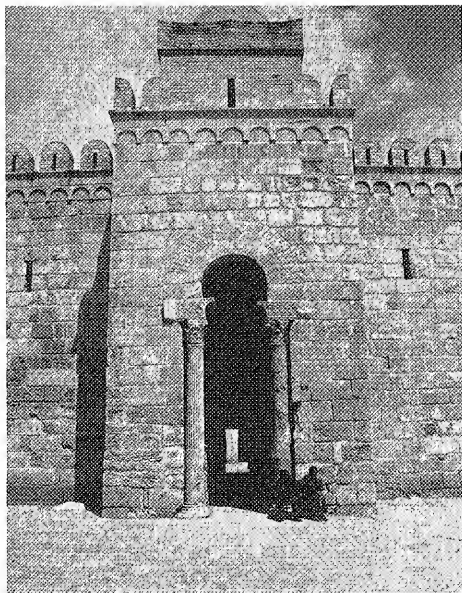


Plate 3. Susa. Ribat. Portal. (Photo: J. Bloom.)

The founding of al-Mahdiyya was only one necessary step toward the realization of Fatimid aspirations in the east. Although the poet undeniably refers to al-Mahdiyya as a “camp” (*rahl*), the metaphor on which the whole poem is built compares it in ideological, if not formal, terms with the sanctuary and exalted precincts of Mecca. Al-Mahdiyya, just as Mecca, had been established by the intervention of the Divine. From the beginning, dominion over and recognition in Mecca were high on the Fatimid list of priorities, on account both of the city’s significance as the Fatimid ancestral home and of its enormous symbolic value in the world at large. Neither could be achieved, however, until Egypt was conquered. The Qarmatians, the Fatimids’ erstwhile Isma‘ili allies and supporters, first reached Mecca in 930 and held the Islamic world hostage when they made off with the Black Stone—the poet’s “sacred corner”—as a tangible sign of the end of an era of Islam.<sup>38</sup> Just as the Qarmatians symbolically ushered

out one old order, the Fatimids symbolically ushered in a new one. Al-Mahdiyya represented that dominion and time were in the service of the rightful imams who heralded the new age.

Unfortunately for the Fatimids, it was far easier to write poetry in praise of the new era than it was to bring it about. Abu’l-Qasim’s three attempts to conquer Egypt—as heir-apparent in 914-15 and 919-21 and as imam in 935—were all unsuccessful, though one of them might account for the renovations and constructions at Ajdabiya in Libya that are thought to be Fatimid. Al-Bakri asserts that the mosque there was built by Abu’l-Qasim.<sup>39</sup> Ibn Hawqal noted an “elegant mosque,” al-Bakri an “octagonal minaret of admirable workmanship,”<sup>40</sup> but the excavated remains hardly justify either remark. The mosque at Ajdabiya follows the plan of al-Mahdiyya at two-thirds scale and a significantly lower level of quality.<sup>41</sup> The “fortress-palace” recently excavated at Ajdabiya may also belong

to this period, although it could equally well have been built to accommodate al-Muʿizz when he made his way to Egypt in 972.<sup>42</sup>

Al-Mahdi died in 934, but Abu'l-Qasim concealed his death for an entire year, fearing that the change of leadership might provide the occasion for some challenge to Fatimid rule.<sup>43</sup> As heir-apparent he had already been entrusted with significant power by al-Mahdi, so he probably had no problem maintaining and even increasing it, and as caliph his policies had the same goal. The chronicles of his reign ignore his successes in maintaining and expanding Fatimid power, however, preferring to describe the disasters of Abu Yazid's revolt, which occupied the last two years of his life. Only fragmentary information remains to provide the barest outline of his court's activities. His biographers have left us with the cryptic assessment that throughout his reign he "never ascended a throne, never rode while hunting, never prayed at a funeral except once, and only once prayed at the 'Id al-Fitr."<sup>44</sup> Ibn 'Idhari adds that "during his reign, he never used a *muzalla*"—a type of parasol held by a courtier over the head of the ruler.<sup>45</sup> Ibn Hammad says that he used one as amir during the reign of his father.<sup>46</sup>

This reference to the *muzalla* is of considerable significance for the development of Fatimid court ceremonial, since later in the Fatimid period in Egypt it became one of the insignia of the ruler's office.<sup>47</sup> Does Ibn 'Idhari's statement that Abu'l-Qasim never used one either as heir-apparent or as the caliph al-Qa'im imply that the imam did not choose to adopt a practice already customary in al-Mahdi's reign, or that the practice had not yet been introduced? Apart from Ibn Hammad, there is no evidence that Abu'l-Qasim—either before or after acceding to the imamate—ever used a *muzalla*. If one disregards hostile and anachronistic accounts of the early Fatimid period, Fatimid court life, such as it was, appears to have been fairly simple and flexible, while use of a *muzalla* indicates a rather elaborate ceremony and static social hierarchy. Thus his biographers' assessments seem to be saying that he continued the relatively modest practices of his predecessor. That could not in any case have included the use of the *muzalla*, because it was not yet known to the Fatimids.

Al-Qa'im's poem addressed to the people of Egypt uses an entirely different imagery:

The edge of the sword is far more curing to the sick  
It is worthier to attain the right when it is needed.

Do you not see me seeking comfort for the night journey?

So I established by the order of God, as it should be. I have been patient, and patience leads to success

Perhaps the intelligent person will be hasty, and therefore he made mistakes and missed the mark  
Until God wanted to strengthen his faith.

So I established by the order of God, as the *muhtasib* does.

And I called the call of one who is certain about the generous God to the peoples of the West:  
He who believes in Him will never fail.

They came quickly to join a noble and generous one  
Descended from Arabs, paying him allegiance.

I have come on the horses of God to your land  
And the face of death has appeared to me from behind the screen.

I sent more ambling noble horses  
Led by men like lions.

Their banner is my grandfather's, their call my father's  
And their belief is mine, near and far.

Praise be to God! You know what occurred:

I won with the striking, devastating, victorious arrow.  
That is my character—as long as I live—and yours.

There it is, a war raging like a blaze.<sup>48</sup>

Here the victorious warrior (or so he would have us believe) has established the law of God (a play of words on his own name, al-Qa'im bi-amr Allah/*qumtu bi-amr Allah*) by curing the sick (i.e., those who have not yet rallied to the Fatimid cause) of their misguided allegiance. It is an image that depends on the charisma of the ruler himself, not on the paraphernalia of his entourage.

In spite of his martial self-portrayal, al-Qa'im did not disdain all of the traditional signs of wealth, such as rich fabrics. During his reign, he promoted a certain Jawdhar, a eunuch who had entered his father's service, to be director of the treasuries of textiles and clothing as well as of the general treasury.<sup>49</sup> Jawdhar's autobiography, which is the most valuable primary source for this period, records that al-Qa'im, like his father, accumulated and bestowed rich fabrics on favored courtiers.<sup>50</sup> Al-Qa'im does not appear to have been an innovator of court practices. When the sources state that he never used a *muzalla* or ascended a throne or minbar, they are distinguishing him, not from his father, but from his son Isma'il, the imam al-Mansur, in whose time exactly these practices were introduced.

Al-Qa'im died in 946, during the worst crisis yet of the Fatimid state. Isma'il prudently concealed the death of his father, just as his father had done before him, so long as Abu Yazid threatened the very gates of the capital itself. The visual and verbal symbols of

authority—coinage, weapons, banners, and the *khutba*—were left unchanged.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, al-Maqrizi tells us that when Ismaʿil went into battle against Abu Yazid in 946, the *muzalla* was carried over his head “like a standard.”<sup>52</sup> In name, Ismaʿil was still only heir-apparent, but it is perfectly plausible to imagine him introducing the *muzalla* for prestige, to bolster the power he so desperately needed.

Following the final defeat of Abu Yazid in 948, Ismaʿil announced the death of his father and returned to the capital in triumph.<sup>53</sup> He was met in Qayrawan by the notables mounted on fine horses and carrying drums and flags,<sup>54</sup> and then in al-Mahdiyya where, pleased by a fine reception, Ismaʿil offered Jawdhar robes of honor.<sup>55</sup> The triumphal return, celebrated in the caliph’s choice of regnal name, *al-mansūr* (“the Victorious One”), was only the first in a series of shifts in the Fatimids’ use of visual symbols that document a concerted effort to give the dynasty a new image.

Al-Mansur was not content merely with replacing his father’s name on the coinage with his own; he made a much more distinctive change. The single circular band containing Koranic verses that had formed the border became two during his father’s reign (some Umayyad and Abbasid coins also exhibit this feature<sup>56</sup>), but al-Mansur removed the text from the inner band of the border, leaving a blank ring to surround the central legends on both the obverse and reverse sides (plates 4 and 5). Coins with this new design were first struck in

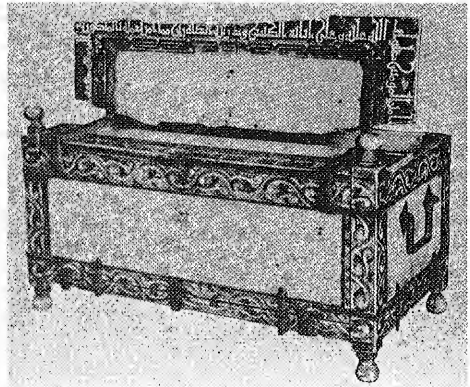


Plate 5. Ivory casket made for al-Muʿizz in al-Mansuriyya. “Arqueta de Carrion de los Condes,” National Archaeological Museum, Madrid.

troduced by al-Mansur—the field dominated by the borders—remained characteristic of virtually all Fatimid coins ever after.<sup>58</sup> This new type of dinar is probably the one Jawdhar calls the *mansūri*.<sup>59</sup> The caliph sent the first thousand struck to Jawdhar, now freed and third in rank in the state.<sup>60</sup> In the accompanying letter, al-Mansur wrote that Jawdhar should accept this money as a benediction, for “no riches are purer than the money which I offer.” The gift was not only tangible wealth but, what was more important, a symbol of the esteem in which the ruler held Jawdhar.

When al-Mansur freed the eunuch Jawdhar he ordered Jawdhar’s name to be added to the *tirāz* embroidered in gold thread on textiles for clothing and carpets. The caliph himself specified what the inscription band should say. It read in part, “made under the supervision of Jawdhar, *maula* of the Commander of the Believers, in al-Mahdiyya the pleasant.”<sup>61</sup> Jawdhar clearly stated that the *tirāz* “was to honor and to augment [the caliph’s] importance. ... He enjoyed the products of his slaves, often exclaiming as we watched over them, ‘Their works are splendid gardens!’ ... He amassed the most precious things to be found in his realm and the finest treasures of every kind and sort, including books of esoteric and exoteric wisdom.”<sup>62</sup>

Al-Mansur’s reign marks the beginning of a concerted policy of gift-giving as well as collecting. In return for the money, horses, camels, and other

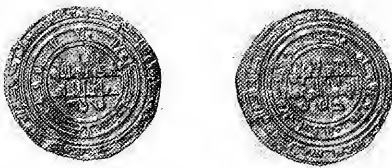


Plate 4a-b. Gold dinar of al-Mansur, struck in al-Mahdiyya in Muharram 337 (948). University Museum, Philadelphia 1002.1.1164, on loan on the American Numismatic Society, New York. (Photo: courtesy American Numismatic Society.)

Dhu’l-Qaʿda 336 (May 948), only two months after his victorious return.<sup>57</sup> Al-Mansur must have been confident that his dynasty’s position was secure to effect such a change so quickly in the normally conservative realm of coinage. With some variation in the number and content of the circular bands, the arrangement in-



animals received in tribute from his subjects,<sup>63</sup> according to Ibn Hammad, during the Abu Yazid crisis Isma'īl provided his supporters with food and clothing; to Maksin ibn Sa'd and Ziri ibn Manad he sent goods, cloth, gold, silver, curios, and treasures "in order to captivate their souls."<sup>64</sup> Another gift to Ziri consisted of robes of honor, perfumes, and "kingly curios (*tarāʿif al-mulūkiyya*) of incalculable price and indescribable beauty." The ruler, having presented the gifts, gave Ziri and his clan noble horses whose saddles and bridles were heavy with gold and silver. Ibn Hammad states that al-Mansur used these gifts to buy the loyalty of the Zirids.<sup>65</sup>

In 947 al-Mansur ordered yet another new capital built a short distance southwest of Qayrawan, this one to be called al-Mansuriyya. Ibn Hawqal identified its site with that of the camp from which Isma'īl effected his final defeat over Abu Yazid, its name referring not only to the builder but also to the victory he won from there.<sup>66</sup> The site has been only partially excavated, and apart from a few summary notes only some of the glass objects have been adequately published.<sup>67</sup> One must therefore still rely on the literary sources, with a warning that they may refer to a later time.

The capital was used by the Fatimids between 949<sup>68</sup> and 972, and after their departure the Zird amirs continued to rule from there and to add new constructions until the eleventh century.<sup>69</sup> One of the earliest accounts, that of the late-tenth-century geographer al-Maqrīṣī, refers to it by its local name Sabra, rather than the official al-Mansuriyya, and tells us:

The Fatimid built it when he first ruled the land. Its name derives from the patience [*sabr*] of his army. It is circular like a drinking-cup. Its equal does not exist. The sultan's [sic] house is in its center, just as in the City of Peace [Baghdad]. There is running water there. In its middle are solid buildings and fine markets. The sultan's mosque is there. The thickness of [the city's] walls is twelve cubits; they are separated from the buildings. Between it and [Qayrawan] there is a road on which people go back and forth on Egyptian donkeys. Its gates are: Bab al-Futuh, Bab Zuwayla, Bab Wadi al-Qassarīn, all of which are made of iron. Another wall is daubed with mud.<sup>70</sup>

According to al-Bakrī, it was al-Mu'izz who transferred the markets to al-Mansuriyya, and the city had five, not three, gates: Bab al-Qibli, or the Southern Gate; Bab al-Sharqī, or the Eastern Gate; Bab Zuwayla; Bab Kutama; and Bab al-Futuh, the Gate of Conquests, through which the ruler marched out to battle with his troops.<sup>71</sup> Ibn Hammad names four gates: Bab al-Qibli on the south, Bab Zuwayla on the east,

Bab Kutama on the north, and Bab al-Futuh on the west; he also remarks that the last was used for expeditions to war.<sup>72</sup> Whether there were three, four, or five gates, they were probably all cardinaly oriented. Their names indicate either directions or tribes (e.g., Zuwayla and Kutama), or are symbolic (Bab al-Futuh). Only the last appears to have been reserved for some specific function (fig. 7).

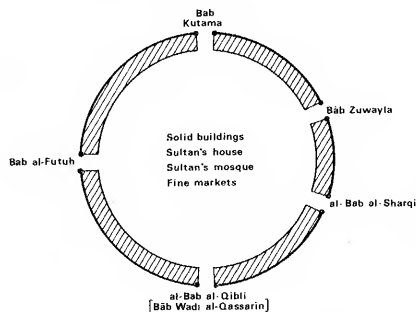


Fig. 7. Al-Mansuriyya. Hypothetical site plan.

Ibn Hammad described the palaces (*qusūr*) built there as "lofty and splendid structures having marvelous plantings and tamed waters," with such names as al-Iwan, Majlis al-Kafur (the Camphor Audience Hall), Hajarat al-Taj (the Chamber of the Diadem), Majlis al-Rayhan (the Fragrant Audience Hall), Hajarat al-Fidda (the Silver Chamber), and Khawarnaq.<sup>73</sup> Although the palaces at al-Mahdiyya had reception halls (*majlis*), the sources provide no such imaginative names for them.<sup>74</sup> Jawdhār refers once to al-Mahdi's palace at al-Mahdiyya as *al-bāb al-tāhir* ("the pure portal"),<sup>75</sup> but all other instances of that phrase date from the reigns of al-Mansur or al-Mu'izz.<sup>76</sup> It is likely, therefore, that such fanciful names for buildings were first introduced during al-Mansur's reign.

Aerial reconnaissance of the site of Sabra/Mansuriyya has brought to light a huge, roughly circular artificial enclosure containing the remains of a number of circular and rectangular basins.<sup>77</sup> To interpret them in the absence of excavations, one has to turn to a contemporary description of a palace, perhaps Khawarnaq, found in a poem by 'Alī ibn Muhammad al-Iyādī, court poet to both al-Mansur and al-Mu'izz.

Now that glory has become great and the great one rules over the stars, a porticoed pavilion spreads. He built a dome for the dominion in the midst of a garden which is a delight to the eye. In well-laid-out squares, whose courtyards are green, whose birds are eloquent. Surrounding an enormous palace among palaces, as if you could see the very sea gushing in its corners. It has a pool for water filling its vast space across which eyes race and flit. The rivulets which gush into it lie like polished swords on the ground. In the midst of its waters an audience hall stands like Khawarnaq amidst the Euphrates' flood. As if the purity of its waters—and its beauty—were as smooth as glass of azure hue. If night unrolls the figure of its stars over it, you would see blacks burned by fire. And if the sun grazes it, it appears like a beautiful bejeweled sword on the diadem of al-Mu'izz. The secluded balconies around it were virgins wearing girdled gowns. The foam dissolves on the face of its waters as does the rain on parched soil.<sup>78</sup>

This huge basin fed by multiple water channels was clearly meant to be the focus of the palace; it was also an engineering feat of no mean scale, for to maintain it, Ibn Hammad said, the "wild waters" of intermittent streams had to be captured, permanent sources of water discovered, and all brought to Qayrawan by aqueduct. In this respect, Fatimid projects in and around Qayrawan continued the Ifriqiyān systems long established in Aghlabid practice.<sup>79</sup> The building and maintenance of large pools of water for pleasure and the extensive irrigation systems necessary to maintain a garden on the arid Qayrawan plain suggest that the ruler had limitless financial resources.

The most famous of these constructions in Qayrawan are undoubtedly the Aghlabid basins near Bab Tunis, but they are only two of the hundreds which the rulers of Ifriqiya built both for public and private use.<sup>80</sup> The waterworks at al-Mansur's new capital were descended from standard Aghlabid practice, which itself was just one example of a pan-Islamic association between palaces and pools that had been typical of all palaces in Iran and the Mediterranean region since pre-Islamic times.<sup>81</sup> It continued under the Fatimids' successors in North Africa, notably at the Qal'a of the Banu Hammad, where, according to the texts, the so-called Dar al-Bahr (House of the Pool) was used for model nautical battles.<sup>82</sup>

Gardens were part of the Islamic palatine vocabulary, in part because they involved a lavish use

of water, and water was very expensive. But the garden was also of course a common metaphor in the Islamic world for paradise, underscored in the passage quoted from al-Iyādi by the choice of the word *janna*, which can mean both paradise and garden. As a verbal image it is often used in the Koran with the same double meaning and—more to the point here—in Ismā'īlī theology as well.<sup>83</sup>

The use of water and gardens puts the palace of al-Mansur squarely in an established Islamic type encountered also in the Aghlabid palaces outside Qayrawan. Al-Mansur, however, was not content with either local or general associations: he wanted al-Mansuriyya to refer specifically both in form and idea to particular great palaces of the Islamic and pre-Islamic past. Al-Maqrīzī wrote that al-Mansur was to be compared with Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, the Abbasid caliph (754-775), for "both of them faced the disruption of the state, the threat of war, and the loss of the caliphate. But the wind of victory blew on them, and order was restored to them so that no conflict remained."<sup>84</sup> This observation would be of no more than passing interest, were there not ample evidence to show that the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur compared himself to his Abbasid predecessor. The physical arrangement of the new capital draws its inspiration directly from al-Mansur's round plan for Baghdad in its shape, number and orientation of gates, the intervallum separating the outer walls from the buildings, and the palace and mosque in the center (figs. 7 and 8).

Ibn Hammad compared the ruined al-Mansuriyya to the ruins of al-Iwan and Ghumdan—the former a great Sasanian palace, the latter a magnificent palace of pre-Islamic Yemen—to express the impermanence of earthly glories. Al-Mu'izz, however, saw it quite differently: for him al-Iwan conjured up splendid associations, and he so named his son's palace.<sup>85</sup> Al-Iyādi's image of the majlis standing like Khawarnaq refers to the magnificent Lakhmid palace which the Abbasids subsequently enlarged,<sup>86</sup> but the use of the name for one of the palaces at al-Mansuriyya suggests that the image was current and more than a mere literary conceit.

The differences between al-Mansuriyya and the old capital at al-Mahdiyya are enormous. Al-Mahdiyya had the practical aspect of a fortress and retreat; al-Mansuriyya was designed for the luxurious pleasures of a prince. Al-Mahdiyya was a public manifestation of the righteousness of the new order; al-Mansuriyya—if ordinary people had had access to it at all—would have appeared as a manifestation of the prince's power

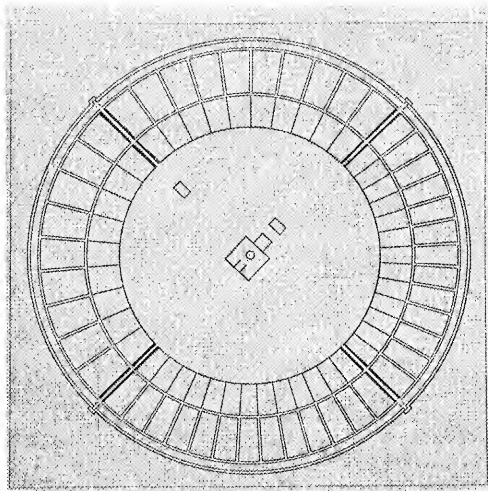


Fig. 8. Baghdad. Round City of al-Mansur (after Hoag).

through the conspicuous display of the limitless resources he had available to devote to his private pleasures. No longer does the caliph see himself solely as the rightful imam, heir to the spiritual and temporal authority of the Prophet. Now he has announced himself heir as well to all of the royal traditions of ages past. He is certainly equal, and probably superior, to all the kings of this world.

This attitude is well illustrated by an episode in 952-53, when the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos sent a monk as ambassador to the court of al-Mansur bearing precious gifts. The purpose of the embassy was to consolidate a truce in Sicily after a severe Byzantine defeat. According to one chronicler, the envoy was struck by the majesty of the sovereign and the pomp with which he surrounded himself, finding it unequalled even in his own land.<sup>87</sup> Al-Mansur, wishing to send appropriate gifts to the emperor in return, wrote to Jawdhar (now in charge of the treasuries) asking him to collect together gifts that would be even finer and of greater value than those he had received from Constantine:

I know how much you desire that there not be a beautiful thing in this world except that it be ours and in our treasuries, and I imagine that this leads you to be miserly

and refuse to send things to the Christians as you have been ordered to do. Do not be this way, for the treasures of the world remain in the world, and we accumulate them only to rival our enemies in splendor, show the nobility of our sentiments, the greatness of our soul, and the generosity of our hearts in the gift of things of which one is envious and about which everyone is selfish.<sup>88</sup>

Al-Mansur's pious confirmation of the transitory nature of worldly wealth does not conceal his shrewd understanding of its value as evidence to the world that the Fatimid imam had great and noble qualities. Whereas the propaganda of his predecessors had been couched in religious and philosophical terms, al-Mansur expanded his public-relations vocabulary to include symbols—coins, gifts, buildings, and spectacle—to reaffirm and enhance the position he occupied. This tactic was by no means his invention; he simply adopted notions of kingship reaching back into the pre-Islamic past.

Al-Mansur's use of splendor and largess is another example of the suppleness with which Fatimid propaganda adapted itself to varying lands and conditions.<sup>89</sup> As a dissident political and social movement, pre-Fatimid Isma'ilism concentrated on an easily concealable propaganda of words and ideas, both because of the nature of the message and because of the nature of the imam's power. The Fatimids now had a temporal realm that had to deal with a heterogeneous population, a significant part of which might never rally to their support. Perhaps they would acquiesce to the popular propaganda of a powerful caliph, heir to the temporal powers of the great kings of history.

Al-Mansur died on 29 Shawwal 341 (19 March 953) after a reign of only six years.<sup>90</sup> His son Ma'add succeeded him as imam after concealing his death for forty days: at 'Id al-Nahr, the feast of the sacrifices, on 10 Dhul-Hijja, he announced his succession to the imamate in the khutba.<sup>91</sup> Al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah ("the Strengtheners of God's Religion"), as the new imam styled himself, prayed in his inaugural appearance that he and his people would be allowed to visit the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, to mount his minbar, to visit his house, to accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca, and "to stand with banners unfurled at the illustrious sacred places."<sup>92</sup> From outward appearances the dynasty was no closer to this end, but al-Mansur's legacy of an enhanced image and real power transformed Fatimid dreams into reality.

Al-Mu'izz's first task was to consolidate and extend his own power. He began by subduing a Kharijite

rebellion in the Zab and, in May-June 958, sent General Jawhar to stem Umayyad activities in the western Maghrib. Within the first six years of his reign, all of the Maghrib except Ceuta and Tangiers recognized Fatimid suzerainty.<sup>93</sup>

Al-Mu'izz's works at al-Mansuriyya continued the pattern established by his father: he added palaces, moved markets and workshops from Qayrawan, and undertook water projects to supply the capital's needs.<sup>94</sup> According to al-Bakri, he had the remains of the abandoned Aghlabid capital at Raqqada razed and the lands plowed under so that only its gardens remained.<sup>95</sup> The population of Qayrawan, led by the Malikite ulema, continued hostile to the court at its doorstep; the feeling was undoubtedly mutual.<sup>96</sup> It is in this climate of mutual antagonism that we should understand al-Bakri's report of the popular objections to al-Mu'izz's attempt to "correct" the qibla of the Great Mosque of Qayrawan. At first deaf to all protests, al-Mu'izz desisted only after various miraculous happenings convinced him to leave the revered qibla as it was, despite its "inaccuracy."<sup>97</sup>

The court at al-Mansuriyya also continued the ceremonial practices of al-Mansur: gifts were exchanged, fine textiles were produced in the court workshops, and court life flourished. The Byzantine embassy of 957 brought the tribute the emperor had agreed to pay for maintaining his hold over Calabria, as well as vessels of gold and silver inlaid with jewels, brocades, silk, nard, and other precious articles "which the Byzantines have."<sup>98</sup> The tribute was not always so luxurious: Aflah al-Nashib, the prefect of Barqa, presented Jawdhar with twenty pack animals in return for Jawdhar's gift of ten camels. Jawdhar, loath to accept the gift, asked al-Mu'izz what to do. The imam replied that gifts are a sign of God's favor; generosity is a natural quality which has nobility of heart and magnanimity at its source.<sup>99</sup>

Tiraz factories producing reed mats and inscribed prayer rugs as well as articles of clothing continued to flourish under al-Mu'izz.<sup>100</sup> In 965 al-Mu'izz ordered Jawdhar to have a prayer rug made. The weavers included in it not only the text the caliph wished to have, but also the usual reference to Jawdhar: "from among the works made under the supervision of Jawdhar, client of the Commander of the Believers." When Jawdhar saw his name embroidered in gold thread he was mortified, supposing that the caliph might think him guilty of self-aggrandizement. The caliph, however, praised the rug as being of "extreme beauty

and perfect manufacture," and paid no attention to the inscription.<sup>101</sup>

One of the most interesting products of the Fatimid workshops of this period must have been a map of the world woven of blue *tustari qurqūbī* silk on which the climates, mountains, seas, cities, rivers, and roads of the earth were shown. Included was a clear representation of Mecca and Medina. Every feature on it was identified in gold, silver, or silk writing. Across the bottom, the legend read, "Among the things ordered by al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, longing for the Sanctuary of God [Mecca], and proclaiming the landmarks of His messenger, in the year 353 [964]." It is reported to have cost twenty-two thousand dinars to make.<sup>102</sup>

The earliest extant textile embroidered with al-Mu'izz's name is dated 355 (966) but is of Egyptian manufacture.<sup>103</sup> An ivory casket now in Madrid, made for al-Mu'izz by a certain A...d[?] al-Khurasani in al-Mansuriyya, probably dates from about the same time (plate 14).<sup>104</sup> The inscriptions on both of these pieces reflect the current political situation, for both quote Koran 61:13, which asks God's aid for early victory. Since this phrase does not appear on textiles made after the Fatimids conquered Egypt, both objects must date from before the conquest.<sup>105</sup>

Court life continued to flourish under al-Mu'izz. The author of the *Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-Tuḥaf* reports that in 351 (962) al-Mu'izz celebrated the circumcisions of his three sons 'Abd Allah, Nizar, and 'Aqid by offering free circumcisions to all male children in his realm.<sup>106</sup> The splendor of the circumcision ceremony surpassed even his father's extravagant display when his sons had been circumcised eleven years earlier.<sup>107</sup> Over ten thousand dinars worth of robes of honor and cloth were sent to Sicily to celebrate the event, and similar amounts were dispatched to the other provinces as well. It was said that over twelve thousand youths were circumcised in a single day.<sup>108</sup> Such lavish celebrations were an acceptably pious form of conspicuous consumption. The Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (908-32) spent six hundred thousand dinars on the circumcision of his five sons, while the circumcision of the future caliph al-Mu'tazz cost his father eighty-six million dirhams.<sup>109</sup>

Considering the later Fatimid development of the veneration of saints, it is surprising that the caliph frowned upon funeral lamentations. Abu 'Abd Allah (ibn al-Qa'im al-Mu'izz's paternal uncle) wrote asking for permission to make funeral lamentations (*al-bukā' wa'l-nawḥ*) on the occasion of the death of his son (al-

Mu'izz's cousin). The caliph refused, saying that such a display was inappropriate for a man of his rank; it was suitable only for slaves and eunuchs.<sup>110</sup> According to Qadi al-Nu'man, al-Mansur had forbidden al-Mu'izz to weep at his death, because Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth imam, had also prohibited it.<sup>111</sup> Undoubtedly, such unseemly behavior was fit only for women.

This did not mean, however, that death was without ceremony. Jawdhar, fearing that the end was near, asked al-Mu'izz for one of his garments to use as a shroud, in order to gain its blessing. The caliph sent him eleven garments in response, at least two from the wardrobes of each one of his predecessors.<sup>112</sup> The list of garments sent is testimony to the variety and sumptuousness of caliphal dress.

The ruler well knew that some might disapprove of his devotion to the pleasure of this world. Al-Maqrizi preserves an unusual episode where al-Mu'izz, at home in al-Mansuriyya one wintery day in 962, summoned the Kutama elders so that they might see how simply he lived. Dressed in plain garments, he sat in a large square majlis spread with felt rugs. Before him were books, letters, and an inkwell. "O my brothers," he said, "I awoke this morning to the wintery cold, and I said to the mother of my sons (who is where she can hear my words), 'Don't you suppose that our brothers assume that we would spend a day like today in eating and drinking, surrounded by cloth-of-gold, brocade, silks, furs, wine, and song, just like the greats of the world?' Then I realized that I should send for you ... so that you could see the way I live when I am alone." The caliph then exhorted the elders to lead noble and abstemious lives.<sup>113</sup>

Al-Mu'izz feared that the programed splendor of the court might backfire and alienate the Kutama, the Fatimids' staunchest allies. Were this to happen, al-Mu'izz's carefully laid plans to expand his realm would be for naught. Al-Mu'izz gave this display of rhetoric in unusually austere surroundings to guarantee the continued support of the Berber troops in the venture he was about to begin.<sup>114</sup>

This performance was just one act in the extraordinary drama al-Mu'izz staged to build and expand upon his very real military achievements in the western Maghrib. In 959-60 through agents in the Hijaz, al-Mu'izz settled a feud in Mecca between the Banu Hasan and the Banu Ja'far in which scores of clan members had already been killed. By secretly paying the blood money, al-Mu'izz satisfied both sides' demands; more important, he ensured that he would be

recognized as suzerain of the holy cities once Egypt fell.<sup>115</sup>

Even the works of the foremost literary figures of the period were aimed at furthering the Fatimid cause.<sup>116</sup> The poet Muhammad ibn Hani al-Andalusi was born in Spain, grew up in a pro-Fatimid atmosphere, and escaped Umayyad persecution when al-Mu'izz's armies were in northern Morocco.<sup>117</sup> Ibn Hani was first a courtier to the Banu Hamdun of Masila, the Fatimid client-state founded during the reign of al-Mahdi; then he joined the Fatimid court at al-Mansuriyya before the Banu Hamdun allied themselves with the Zanata and pro-Umayyad factions.<sup>118</sup> Ibn Hani was not only the greatest Maghribi poet—"like al-Mutanabbi in the East," in the words of Ibn Khaldun<sup>119</sup>—but was also the greatest panegyrist and literary propagandist of the Fatimid court. The geographer Abu'l-Qasim ibn Hawqal, though perhaps not quite "a spy in the service of the Fatimids," as Reinhard Dozy believed, was certainly a Fatimid sympathizer. This is amply demonstrated by his comments on Umayyad Spain and Kalbid Sicily, and explains his passages on Nubia and the history of North Africa.<sup>120</sup>

The Fatimids believed themselves surrounded by three major enemies: the Umayyads of Spain, the Abbasids, and the Byzantines. The propaganda written by Ibn Hani and Ibn Hawqal attacked where they thought them most vulnerable. The Umayyads were chastised for cowardice, ostentatious luxury, questionable genealogy, and ineptitude.<sup>121</sup> The Abbasids, the weakest and most distant of the Fatimid adversaries, were seen as debauched people unworthy to rule, effeminate, indifferent to the Byzantine advances in Syria they were unable to check, and an old, decrepit dynasty which should make room for new blood.<sup>122</sup> The propaganda against the Byzantines, which was written primarily for internal consumption and self-congratulation, created an image of the infidel ever-defeated by the might of Fatimid land and sea power.<sup>123</sup>

Fatimid propaganda and diplomacy resulted in a series of convergent attacks against Egypt, the Byzantine fleet, the Qarmatians in Palestine, and Berber tribes near Alexandria. After 966, an official Fatimid delegation was sent to Egypt inviting the amir Kafur to recognize Fatimid suzerainty. The embassy was given an amiable reception, but nothing more.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, al-Mu'izz ordered the digging of wells along the route to Egypt and a fortress (*qasr*) to be built at every stage.<sup>125</sup> In the following year al-Mu'izz and Nicephoras Phocas concluded a treaty which temporarily

ly eliminated any Byzantine threat to Fatimid plans.<sup>126</sup> On 20 Jumada I 357 (23 April 968), Kafur died, leaving Egypt open for conquest. The news reached al-Mu'izz in al-Mansuriyya a month later.

Al-Mu'izz made final preparations for the expedition that same year, collecting money from the state treasury and readying the troops. General Jawhar left Ifriqiya on 14 Rabi' I 358 (5 February 969); by the middle of Ramadan of the same year a messenger had returned to al-Mu'izz with the glad tidings that Egypt had fallen to the Fatimids.<sup>127</sup> Ibn Hani, ready on the spot, recited a qasida which began:

The Abbasids are saying, "Has Egypt been conquered?"

So say to them, "The matter has been decided!"

Jawhar has already passed Alexandria:

The heralds have announced it, and victory is his!<sup>128</sup>

The audience at al-Mansuriyya would have appreciated this description of the inept Abbasids stupefied by the events taking place before their very eyes.

One of Jawhar's first acts in Egypt was to strike coins in the new ruler's name. He sent a sack of them to al-Mu'izz in al-Mansuriyya as a symbol of the conquest. Since these coins, of which a few samples survive, differ from the Ifriqiyān coinage of the same year only in the mint mark, the dies must have been prepared in advance, showing that this was no spontaneous gesture.<sup>129</sup> Al-Mu'izz, hearing that his faithful retainer Jawhar was near death, sent him some of this "blessed coinage, struck in our name in Egypt by the grace of God." "I hope," the caliph said, "that God will prolong his life so that he may make the pilgrimage with us and that we may give him dinars struck in Baghdad. For God will realize our hopes."<sup>130</sup>

Once again, al-Mu'izz made his dynasty's two goals quite clear: universal recognition that the Fatimids were the sole legitimate heirs of the Prophet, and a physical and spiritual return to their ancestral home in Mecca, thereby fulfilling the obligation of pilgrimage. The map which al-Mu'izz ordered five years earlier was not merely a beautiful object with which to decorate the palace; it was a map for the war room of the Fatimid state. Among all the images of mountains, seas, rivers, roads, and cities, Mecca and Medina stood out as the ultimate destinations. Thus Jawhar's conquest of Egypt was only one of many steps in the right direction.

To that end, outside of Fustat Jawhar built a fortified campground (*qasr*) as a base of operations for further forays east.<sup>131</sup> Its original enclosure walls were

repeatedly modified in the following months against an expected Qarmatian attack, which finally materialized in December 971. In the previous year, the holy cities in Arabia had quickly surrendered to the Fatimids, evidence of the potency of Fatimid propaganda. Jawhar's army, however, met stronger resistance in Palestine and Syria, where Fatimid expansion halted. This temporary setback may have moved al-Mu'izz to take his court to Egypt in order better to supervise the campaigns. He wrote Jawhar of his decision, and Jawhar began building a residence (*qasr*) suitable for the ruler.<sup>132</sup>

Al-Mu'izz finally arrived in Egypt on 7 Ramadan 362 (21 June 972), four years and a few weeks after Jawhar, leaving Ifriqiya in the hands of his trusted amirs. The camp, now graced with a palace, was renamed al-Qāhira ("the Victorious"), probably out of wishful thinking.<sup>133</sup> Arriving from Alexandria, where he had been met by notables presented according to rank, al-Mu'izz was again greeted in Giza by notables, this time from Fustat, who accompanied him and his procession—including the coffins of his ancestors—across the Nile by bridge into Fustat, which had been decorated especially for the procession. The parade halted when it reached the new palace, and al-Mu'izz fell prostrate in prayer, thanking God for his safe arrival. In the following days he held court in the palace, sitting on a golden throne (*sarīr*) that Jawhar had prepared for him.<sup>134</sup>

This spectacle, a far cry from al-Mahdi's modest entry into Qayrawan sixty-odd years earlier, was the culmination of the policy instituted by al-Mansur and developed by him and his son. Faced with the threat from Abu Yazid, al-Mansur turned a near debacle into a public-relations triumph through a combination of military prowess and shrewd propaganda. In contrast, his two predecessors seem to have been relatively indifferent to the powers of persuasion that propaganda could wield.

The career of Jawhar, trusted servant of all four Fatimid imams, clearly illustrates the change. Under the first two rulers, when prestige was indicated simply and traditionally through recognition in the khutba, inscription on coins, and the bestowal of textiles on favored individuals, Jawhar was named to head the only treasury other than the general fund, that is, the royal collection of textiles and clothing. In al-Mansur's reign, however, Jawhar was put in charge of a new department that marked a change: the royal treasury became a source of political gift-giving. In addition to

textiles, animals, or simple payments of money, for the first time we hear that the ruler offered "kingly" curios and treasures to win the Berbers' loyalty. When the Byzantine embassy of 952 brought al-Mansur precious gifts, Jawdhār was instructed to reciprocate with royal treasure, although we learn that he was reluctant to part with the precious goods that al-Mansur had collected. He did not understand, as his ruler did, that power lay not in accumulating treasure, but in dispensing largess with flair.

Jawdhār's conservative bent appears again in the incident with al-Mu'izz over the tiraz: Jawdhār wanted the wording in the inscription to be correct, while al-Mu'izz appears not to have cared at all. He was much more concerned about his public image, as can be seen by the calculation involved in his demonstration of the simple life before the Kutama elders.

Parallel developments are apparent in architecture, which is particularly striking considering the paucity of the information left behind about it. Al-Mahdiyya was built for a practical reason: it was a secure base from which to conquer the world. While poetically it might be compared to Mecca, visually its closest referents were local architectural forms, purged when necessary of such recent impious innovations as the minaret. Al-Mansuriyya was built on a far grander scale, recalling Baghdad and the great palaces of the Islamic and Arab past as well as the nearer splendors of Raqqada, the Aghlabid capital to which it was heir. When al-Mu'izz ordered Raqqada plowed under, it was as a most forceful *prise de possession*, and not for want of additional arable land.

The half-century of Fatimid rule in North Africa had a significance far greater than a simple political prelude to Fatimid rule in Egypt. Al-Mansur introduced his dynasty to modes of propagandizing which had long been common to the kings and emperors of the Mediterranean world. The Fatimids' genius lay in their being such quick learners: grasping the lessons in North Africa, they went on to surpass all their teachers in founding a most dazzling court in Egypt. While Fatimid art has often been considered the great secular revival of medieval Egyptian art, it should also always be understood as another cog in the great propaganda machine the Fatimids put in motion to conquer not only the lands but the minds of the world.

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## NOTES

1. This article appears in somewhat different form as part of my doctoral dissertation, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture: Islamic Art in North Africa and Egypt in the Fourth Century A.H. (Tenth Century A.D.);" (Harvard University, 1980). There is still no standard historical survey of this period in European languages. The best introductions are Marius Canard's article, "Fātimids," in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1960-) [hereafter *EP*], vol. 2, pp. 852-53, and Georges Marçais, *La Berbérie musulmane et l'Orient au moyen âge* (Paris, 1946), chap. 3: "La Crise fatimite."
2. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-Bayān al-Mughrib*, ed. G. S. Colin and É. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1948), 1:158.
3. Al-Maqrīzī, *Iti'āz al-Hunafā' bi-Akhbār al-Fātimīyyīn al-Khulafā'* (Cairo, 1967-73), 1:134.
4. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'id wa'l-Fitābir bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa'l-Āthār* (Cairo, 1853), 1:350, and Ibn Khaldūn, *Histoire des Berbères*, trans. Mac Guckin de Slane (Algiers, 1852-56) 2:520, which omits the word *balaghat* from the obverse.
5. J. Farrugia de Candia, "Monnaies fatimides du Musée du Bar-do," *Revue Tunisienne*, n.s. 7 (1936): 343-44, cat. no. 1 and pl. 1. The reverse clearly reads *balaghat* in contrast to the author's reading *al-'izz*.
6. Ibn Ḥammād, *Akhbār Mulūk Banī 'Ubayd wa-Siyarātihim* (*Histoire des rois 'oba'idides*), ed. and trans. M. Vonderheyden (Algiers-Paris, 1927), pp. 7-8; trans. p. 19, gives the text of these inscriptions. On banners: "Soon will their multitude be put to flight and they will show their backs" (Koran 54:45); on weapons: "Multitudes on God's path"; on trappings: "Dominion is God's"; on Abu 'Abd Allah's personal seal: "Put your confidence in God and you are on the path of manifest truth" (Koran 27:79); on his official seal: "The orders of your Lord have been accomplished in truth and justice. His words are immutable. He is the Hearer and the Knower" (Koran 6:116).
7. 'Ubayd Allah may only have been Abu'l-Qasim's spiritual, not his natural, father. See *EP*, s.v. 'al-Kā'im," and Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Isma'īlism* (Cambridge, 1940).
8. Marius Canard, "L'Autobiographie d'un chambellan du Mahdī 'Obeidallah le Fātimide," *Hesperis* (1952): 279-324, esp. 316-18.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 318, n. 4; also Marius Canard, "Le Cérémonial fatimite et le cérémonial byzantin: Essai de comparaison," *Byzantion* 21 (1951): 356, n. 1. The *Sirat Ja'far* was not composed until after the Fatimids ruled Egypt.
10. Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* 1:350.
11. W. Ivanow, *Isma'īlī Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (Oxford, 1942), pp. 217-18; Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib* 1:158; Ibn Ḥammād, *Akhbār*, p. 9, trans. p. 15.
12. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:158.
13. Ivanow, *Isma'īlī Tradition*, pp. 217-18; Ibn Ḥammād, *Akhbār*, p. 9; trans. p. 21.
14. Al-Maqrīzī, *Iti'āz*, 1:54. The earliest coins of al-Mahdī have not, to my knowledge, been preserved; those of 915-16 do replace Abu 'Abd Allah's legends with the caliph's name.
15. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:159.
16. Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, pt 2: *Syrie du Sud: Jerusalem*, vol. 2, *Haram*, pp. 228-42, especially pp. 237 ff.
17. Nearly two centuries after al-Ma'mun tampered with the inscription, al-Maqrīzī correctly identified the builder of the

- Dome of the Rock. See al-Maqrīṣī, *Aḥsān al-Taḥqīm fī Maʿrifat al-Aqālīm* (*Descriptio Imperii Moslemici*), ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1877), p. 159, translated by G. S. A. Ranking and R. F. Azoo as *Aḥsanu-t-Taḥqīm fī Maʿrifat al-Aqālīm* (Calcutta, 1897), p. 262.
18. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:277. A defaced inscription, dated 378 (888-89) from the Great Mosque of Sfax, may be evidence of these anti-Fatimid, anti-Shiʿite measures, for all of-fending phrases have been chiseled off. See Georges Marçais and Lucien Golvin, *La Grande Mosquée de Sfax* (Tunis, 1960), p. 16, and Lucien Golvin, *Essai sur l'architecture religieuse musulmane* (Paris, 1970-79) 3:164-65, and also p. 154 for a similar case at the Zaytuna mosque in Tunis.
  19. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib* 1:174 puts the completion of the walls in Rahīʾ I 304; al-Maqrīṣī states that they were begun in Dhū'l-Qaʿda 303, that is, only four months before (see al-Maqrīṣī, *Khitāt* 1:351).
  20. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:184.
  21. For the mosque, see Alexandre Lézine, *Mahdiyya: Recherches d'archéologie islamique* (Paris, 1965), pp. 65 ff. for the musalla, see al-Maqrīṣī, *Khitāt* 1:351, line 13.
  22. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:187; A. A. Vasilev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, trans. M. Canard, vol. 2, pt. 1 (Brussels, 1968), p. 250; for the dockyard (*dār al-sinaʿa*), see al-Bakrī, *al-Mughrib fī Dhikr Bilād Ifriqiya wa'l-Maghrib*, ed. and trans. Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris, 1965) p. 30, trans. p. 68, and Lézine, *Mahdiyya*, pp. 49-53.
  23. Al-Maqrīṣī, *Itiʿāz* 1:79, and Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard* (Leiden, 1938) 1:71; trans. by J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet as *Configuration de la terre* (Paris, 1964) 1:68.
  24. Ibid.
  25. Georges Marçais, *L'Architecture musulmane d'Occident* (Paris, 1954), p. 79; Lézine, *Mahdiyya*, pp. 49-53; Alexandre Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie ifriqiyenne," in: *Mahdiyya, quelques précisions sur la 'ville' des premiers Fatimides*, *Revue des Études Islamiques* 35 (1967): 82 ff.
  26. For the Saqīfa, see Lézine, *Mahdiyya*, pp. 24-38; for the mosque, pp. 65 ff.
  27. Marçais, *Architecture musulmane*, pp. 78-79 and fig. 39; Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie," pp. 82 ff.
  28. Lucien Golvin, "Le Palais de Zirī à Achir," *Ars Orientalis* 6 (1966): 47 ff.
  29. Lézine conveniently supposed that al-Bakrī (*Mughrib*, p. 30; trans. pp. 67-78) confused directions when writing about the palaces but not when discussing other buildings.
  30. The Great Mosque of Sfax was also a copy of the mosque in Qayrawan, but it had a minaret modeled on that of Qayrawan; see Golvin, *Essai sur l'architecture*, 3:162-71.
  31. Marçais, *Architecture musulmane*, pp. 106 ff.
  32. Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie."
  33. The bastions, once thought to have been tower bases, as at the mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo, are now known to have been cisterns, for the nature of the site precluded digging cisterns under the court (see Lézine, *Mahdiyya*, p. 95).
  34. Of early Fatimid mosques in Egypt, only the mosque of al-Hakim has two minarets, for which I have elsewhere ("The Mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo," *Muqarnas* 1 [1983]: 15-36) argued a particular interpretation. No other early Fatimid mosque has even one minaret. For portals, see my article, esp. pp. 24-28, and Caroline Williams, "The Cult of ʿAlid Saints in the Fatimid Monuments of Cairo, pt. I," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 37-52.
  35. Williams, "Cult of ʿAlid Saints, pt. I."
  36. The most obvious examples are the Azhar mosque and the mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo, for which see K. A. C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1952). Less well known are the mosques at Ajdabiya and Medina Sultan in Libya, for which see David Whitehouse, "Excavations at Ajdabiya: Second Interim Report," *Society for Libyan Studies: Fourth Annual Report* (1972-73): 20-27.
  37. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:184.
  38. *EP*, s.v. "Karmati."
  39. Al-Bakrī, *Mughrib*, p. 5; trans. pp. 16-17. Yaʿqubi, writing in the late eighth century, already noted a citadel, a congregational mosque, and permanent markets. See Abu'l-ʿAbbas Ahmad Yaʿqubi, *Les Pays*, trans. Gaston Wiet (Cairo, 1937), p. 203. An inscription, containing the letters 'ayn, shin, and ra', was read as "ten" or "twenty" by Lowick, which led Whitehouse to suggest the dates A.H. 310 or A.H. 320. See David Whitehouse, "Excavations at Ajdabiya: An Interim Report," *Society for Libyan Studies: Third Annual Report* (1971-72): 12-21; and Whitehouse, "Excavations at Ajdabiya: Second Interim Report," pp. 22-24. The style of the epigraphy, however, suggests that the correct date may well be A.H. 410 or A.H. 420.
  40. Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard* 1:67; trans. p. 73; al-Bakrī, *Mughrib*, p. 5; trans. pp. 16-17.
  41. Whitehouse, "Excavation at Ajdabiya: Interim Report," pp. 15-18.
  42. Antony Hutt, *Islamic Architecture: North Africa* (London, 1977), pls. 24-25; and Whitehouse, "Excavation at Ajdabiya: Interim Report," pp. 18-21.
  43. Al-Maqrīṣī, *Itiʿāz* 1:72.
  44. Al-Maqrīṣī, *Itiʿāz* 1:86, and al-Maqrīṣī, *Khitāt* 1:208 are virtually identical; a similar passage appears in Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:208; however, in the *Khitāt* the word *ṣarī* ("throne") is replaced by *minhar* ("pulpit").
  45. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:208.
  46. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 14; trans. p. 27.
  47. Al-Maqrīṣī, *Itiʿāz*, 1:82. Abu'l-ʿAbbas Ahmad al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-Aʿshā fī Sinaʿa*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1913-19), gives a description of the muzaalla as it appeared in his own (i.e., Mamluk) time; unfortunately, it is not relevant for a period five centuries earlier. See also Canard, "Cérémonial fatimite," p. 389, n. 3, where, however, he confuses the muzaalla with the shamsa.
  48. Hasan Husni ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *Muḥammad Tārīkh al-Adab al-Tūnisī* (Tunis, 1968), p. 83.
  49. Abū ʿAlī Manṣūr al-ʿAzīzī al-Jawdhārī, *Sīrat al-Ustādh Jawdhār*, ed. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Shāʿira (Cairo, 1954), p. 39; Marius Canard, *Vie de l'Ustādh Jawdhār* (Algiers, 1957), p. 52.
  50. Fatimid expeditions to Sicily and southern Italy in 925-26 and 928-29 are reported to have returned with spoils including silk, brocade, goods, and jewels (Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:190, 193). A textile industry in North Africa had not yet been developed; there is scanty evidence for textiles of North African origin before the tenth century. See R. B. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles* (Beirut, 1972), pp. 10 and 177. Jawdhār was given robes of honor by al-Mahdi on numerous occasions (al-Jawdhārī, *Sīrat*, pp. 45-46; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, p. 51).



51. Al-Maqrizi, *Khilat* 1:351, and *Iti'az*, 1:86 and 89. The coins struck in both Qayrawan and al-Mahdiyya in 335 (946-47) preserve the name and titles of al-Qa'im. See Farrugia de Candia, "Monnaies fatimides," nos. 20 and 21.
52. Al-Maqrizi, *Iti'az* 1:82.
53. The accounts of the reception are varied; al-Maqrizi, *Iti'az* 1:86, reports that al-Mansur returned to al-Mahdiyya; Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, pp. 36-37; trans. pp. 57-58, reports that he returned to Qayrawan only to depart again to fight Abu Yazid's son. He then returned once more to Qayrawan and eventually to al-Mahdiyya.
54. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, pp. 36-37; trans. pp. 57-58.
55. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, pp. 52-53; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 76.
56. See, for example, Farrugia de Candia, "Monnaies fatimides," no. 19 (pl. 1) dated A.H. 333.
57. Stanley Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 4 (London, 1879): 6, no. 16 and pl. 1. Al-Maqrizi, *Iti'az* 1:86, reports that al-Mansur returned to al-Mahdiyya in Ramadan.
58. Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins*, vol. 4, pls. 1-2; exceptions appear to be a few coins from the reigns of al-Hakim and al-Mustansir, e.g., nos. 104 and 157.
59. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 60; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 88. Actually, the text refers to quarter-dinars.
60. Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, pp. 74-75 and n. 96.
61. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 52; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 75. Tiraz were not the only products made by the workshops of al-Mahdiyya. Sometime before 946, al-Mansur had written to Jawdhar to order gilded torches and swords with sheaths of al-Mahdiyya manufacture, for they were "unparalleled among Frankish, Yemeni, or others" (see al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 47; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 67).
62. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, pp. 52-53; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, pp. 76-77.
63. Ibn Hammad, despite his anti-Fatimid bias, is especially well informed on the events concerning the Abu Yazid affair. He mentions two separate gifts in 335 (946-47) to Isma'il, one of noble horses, pure-bred camels, and regular horses (among other items) from the Kutana chiefs and another from 'Ali ibn Hamdun, the governor of Masila, of 25 horses, 25 *najib* camels, 4 other camels, and a magnificent civet (*Akhbar*, pp. 25-26; trans., p. 43). In 946 Jawdhar sent Isma'il a gift of ten thousand dinars (al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 47; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 67).
64. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 27; trans. p. 46.
65. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 29; trans. p. 48. While this interpretation may well be true, once again it indicates the author's desire to denigrate the Fatimids wherever possible.
66. Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-Ard* 1:72; trans. 1:69. This, however, does not appear to be true.
67. Georges Marçais and Louis Poinssot, *Objets Kairouanais* (Tunis, 1952) 2:271-406; S. M. Zbiss, "Mahdiyya et Sabra Mansouriya: Nouveaux documents d'art fatimite et d'Occident," *Journal Asiatique* 244 (1956): 79-93; Marçais, *Architecture musulmane*, pp. 29-81; R. H. Idris, *La Barberie orientale sous les Zirides* (Paris, 1959), pp. 425-27.
68. Ibn 'Idhari, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, 1:219, gives the date 336 (947-48), then cites al-Bakri, *Mughrib*, p. 25; trans., p. 58, which itself gives 337 (948-49). Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-Ard*, 1:72; trans., 1:69, the earliest authority, says that the caliph moved in at the end of Shawwal 337 (April 949). Allowing that the city was built in the shortest possible time, it seems fair to assume that the plan was conceived at least a year before. To my knowledge, the earliest dinar struck there is dated 338 (949-50) (Farrugia de Candia, "Monnaies fatimides," no. 28).
69. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 24; trans., p. 41, says that al-Mufizz built a palace called al-Iwan for his son. For Zirid constructions at the site, see Idris, *Barberie orientale*, p. 426.
70. Al-Maqrizi, *Ahwan al-Taqasam*, p. 266.
71. Al-Bakri, *Mughrib*, p. 25; trans. p. 58.
72. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, pp. 23-24; trans. p. 41.
73. Ibid.
74. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 42; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 60. There is no textual evidence whatsoever for the *dar al-amma* that Lézine postulated at al-Mahdiyya (cf. Lézine, "Notes d'archéologie").
75. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 48, where the "pure" is undoubtedly an epithet attached to those of pure Fatimid lineage, common in later inscriptions.
76. Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, pp. 84, 90, 100, 104, and 127.
77. M. Solignac, "Installations hydrauliques de Kairouan," *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales* 10 (1952): 262-73.
78. 'Abd al-Wahhab, *Mujammal*, p. 97. While this poem was probably composed during al-Mu'izz's reign (cf. line 10), the building described could very well be of al-Mansur's time.
79. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 24; trans. p. 41, and Solignac, "Installations hydrauliques."
80. Solignac, "Installations hydrauliques," pp. 37-39, 230 ff., and al-Bakri, *Mughrib*, p. 26; trans., pp. 59-60.
81. Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 118.
82. Lucien Golvin, *Le Magrib central à l'époque des Zirides* (Paris, 1957), p. 188.
83. Grabar, *Alhambra*, pp. 120-22. In Fatimid times, the mosque was likened to *janna*, because it was there that one developed and practiced the qualities of the inmates of Paradise (see Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," pp. 121-23).
84. Al-Maqrizi, *Iti'az*, 1:91.
85. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 24; trans., p. 41.
86. *EP*, s.v. "Khawarnaq."
87. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 370.
88. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 61; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 89.
89. Marius Canard, "L'Impérialisme des Fatimides et leur propagande," *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales* 6 (1942-47): 157, quoting Iwanow, "A Creed of the Fatimids," pp. 3 and 5.
90. Al-Maqrizi, *Iti'az* 1:88. Al-Maqrizi accepts a reign of eight years, although "some say seven years and ten days."
91. It was given in two parts separated by a break in which the khatib sat on the last step of the minbar; see al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 76; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, pp. 111 ff. and 144, n. 222.
92. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 83; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 121.
93. Marçais, *Barberie musulmane*, p. 154.
94. Ibn Hammad, *Akhbar*, p. 24; trans., p. 41; al-Bakri, *Mughrib*, p. 25; trans., p. 58; Solignac, "Installations hydrauliques," passim, esp. pp. 49-51.
95. Al-Bakri, *Mughrib*, p. 27; trans., p. 63.
96. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 85; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhar*, p. 125. See also E. Quatremère, "La Vie du khalife Moezz Lidin Allah," *Journal Asiatique* 2 (1836): 409, and F. Wüstenfeld, *Geschichte der Fatimiden Chalifen* (Göttingen, 1880), p. 103.
97. Al-Bakri, *Mughrib*, p. 74; trans., p. 151; K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford, 1932-69) 2:213. The qibla at

- Qayrawan is approximately 25° too far to the south of east, but its placement was revealed to 'Uqba ibn Nafi' under equally miraculous circumstances (see Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 1:61).
98. S. M. Stern, "An Embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz," *Byzantion* 20 (1950): 244. The account is taken from the unpublished *Kitāb al-Majālīs wa'l-Musayārāt* [Book of audiences and voyages] by the Qadi al-Nu'man, the foremost theologian of the early Fatimid court.
  99. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 95; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, p. 141.
  100. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 100; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, pp. 151-52.
  101. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 88; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, pp. 129-30.
  102. Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* 1:417. It was discovered in the treasury of rugs and furnishings during the looting of 1068-69. See Étienne Combe et al., *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (Cairo, 1931-75) [hereafter *RCEA*] 4:186, no. 1564 with bibliography.
  103. *RCEA* 5, no. 1622. A linen cloth with a red silk inscription reading: "In the name of the King, the Merciful and Compassionate God: Assistance from God and high victory to the servant and friend of God, Ma'add Abi Tamim, the Imam al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, Commander of the Believers. May God's blessings be upon him. In the year 355 [966]."
 

If correctly read, the invocation is a very unusual variant of the bismillah. The phrase, "*Nasr min Allah wa-fath qarib*" (Koran 61:13), refers to the campaign to conquer Egypt which was about to begin in earnest. The date A.H. 355 confirms al-Maqrizi's statement that al-Mu'izz's name was written on the tiraz in Tinnis, Damietta, al-Qays, and Bahnsa before he actually ruled Egypt (see *Itti'az*, 1:230).
  104. The casket is known as the "Arqueta de Carrión de los Condes," and is in the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid. The inscription (*RCEA* 5:89, no. 1811, listed s.a. 359) reads: "In the name of the Merciful and Compassionate God: Assistance from God and high victory to the servant and friend of God, Ma'add Abu [sic] Tamim, the Imam al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, Commander of the Believers. May God's blessings be upon him, his fine ancestors, and his pure descent. This is from the things which he ordered at al-Mansuriyya the pleasant. The work of A...d al-Khurasani." Aside from an error in spelling, the central portion of this inscription is the same as *RCEA* 1622 (above, n. 103). The inclusion of the caliph's ancestors and his descent in the *tashih* becomes a characteristic feature of Fatimid inscriptions, although the exact wording has yet to evolve into its definitive form.
 

The casket is listed in the *RCEA* under A.H. 359, but in fact dates from before the conquest of Egypt. Koran 61:13 does not always appear in textiles of the period. In contrast to the example given in n. 103, another linen fragment with red silk embroidery (*RCEA* 5:191 no. 1637a) omits any introductory phrase between the bismillah and the imam's personal name Ma'add. The evidence is not conclusive, however, since tiraz inscriptions are often abbreviated for lack of space or out of carelessness.
  105. For example, *RCEA* 5:91, no. 1814: a linen fragment dated 359 (969-70), which has a very different message, asking God's benediction on His prophet Muhammad and the People of the House, or descendants of 'Ali.
  106. Al-Qadi al-Rashid ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakha'ir wa'l-Tuhaf*, ed. M. Hamid Allah (Kuwait, 1959), pp. 124-25.
  107. Ibn Hammad (*Akhbar*, p. 39; trans., p. 60) reported that al-Mansur had his sons circumcised in A.H. 340 along with a thousand children of Qayrawan, to whom he distributed new clothes and expense money. Adam Mez (*The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh and D. S. Margoliouth [Patna, 1937], p. 428) quotes the *Kitāb al-Uyūn wa'l-Hadīq* IV Berl. 252a, which says that 10,000 children were circumcised, 500 to 1,300 each day for a period of seventeen days. Each child received, according to his rank and position, from less than 100 dirhams to 100 dinars. The total cost was 200,000 dinars: "Such expenditure and extravagance had never been experienced before."
  108. Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Dhakha'ir*, p. 125.
  109. *Ibid.*, pp. 111 ff., on famous circumcisions, especially pp. 119 ff. for al-Mu'tazz and p. 124 for al-Muqtadir; see also Mez, *Renaissance of Islam*, p. 428.
  110. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, p. 100; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, pp. 150-51.
  111. Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, p. 151, n. 340 for a long discussion of the Fatimid attitudes toward mourning.
  112. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, pp. 80-81; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, pp. 211-12 and n. 465. The list reads like an inventory of the variety of robes and textiles used by the caliphs: From al-Mu'izz, a lined garment of cloth from Marv with a tunic beneath it; from al-Mahdi, a lined garment of a solid-colored cloth with a tunic; two tunics from al-Qa'im as well as trousers, a turban, and a belt; and a robe of cloth from Marv and a tunic from al-Mansur.
 

The caliph sent the following message along with the garments: "Conserve these garments until the time of which you spoke [i.e., his death], after which God will have prolonged your life so that you will join us in the pilgrimage to the sacred house of God [Mecca] and the visit to the grave of our ancestor Muhammad [at Medina], so that this will be a joy to your eyes by the grace of God to His friends, God willing."

Previously, the caliph had sent Jawdhār a pair of slippers or leggings (*ranāf*) originally worn by al-Mansur. Jawdhār was to wear them, "recognizing God's blessing and felicity in them." Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, pp. 112-13; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, p. 169.
  113. Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, 1:95, and *Khitat* 1:352.
  114. Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides," p. 127.
  115. Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az* 1:101, and *Khitat* 1:353. See also Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides," p. 176, no. 72.
  116. Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides."
  117. *EP* 3:758-86.
  118. Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, p. 109, n. 208, and Canard, "Famille de partisans."
  119. Ibn Hāni al-Andalusī, *Tahyīn al-Ma'ānī fī-Sharh Diwān ibn Hānī*, ed. Zahid 'Alī (Cairo, 1352/1933), p. 7; Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides."
  120. Reinhard Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* quoted by Canard in "Impérialisme des Fatimides," p. 156, n. 2, and *EP*, s.v. "Ibn Hawqal," by A. Miquel.
  121. Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides," pp. 162-69.
  122. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-85.
  123. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-92.
  124. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
  125. Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az* 1:96. Whitehouse, "Excavation at Ajdabiyah: Interim Report," p. 21, suggests that the qasr at Ajdabiyah was one of these foundations.
  126. Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides," p. 186.
  127. Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az* 1:96, and *Khitat* 2:27.
  128. Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az* 1:97; Canard, "Impérialisme des Fatimides," p. 184; Ibn Hani, *Diwan*, chap. 22, vv. 1 ff.

129. Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of Muhammadan Coins*, 4:9-10, nos. 24-28 (al-Mansuriyya 343-355), and no. 29 (pl. 1: Miṣr 358). Such a coin, with its magnificent inscription in three bands around a blank center, must have been a remarkable sight to Egyptians accustomed to the standard Abbasid coinage. Al-Maqrizi calls this coin *al-sikkat al-ḥamrāʾ* ("the red coinage") in *Ittiʿāz* 1:115. His transcription of the legend on it tallies exactly with Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of Muhammadan Coins*, no. 29, except that al-Maqrizi read it from the center to the edge.
130. Al-Jawdhari, *Sirat*, pp. 110-11; Canard, *Vie de Jawdhār*, pp. 166-67.
131. Al-Maqrizi, *Ittiʿāz* 1:107 ff.; and Bloom, "Meaning in Early Fatimid Architecture," chap. 3.
132. Al-Maqrizi, *Ittiʿāz* 1:133.
133. Paul Kunitzsch, "Zur Namengebung Kairos (al-Qāhira = Mars?)," *Der Islam* 52 (1975): 209-25.
134. Al-Maqrizi, *Ittiʿāz* 1:133-35.